

places, to overbroad felony voter purges, Florida showed the system is broken.

THE PROBLEM WAS NOT JUST IN FLORIDA—IT WAS
NATIONWIDE

In Georgia, "Lines too long" was the single most commonly heard complaint from voters. Citizens in some communities waited at the polls for two hours or more, and some metro Atlanta voters did not cast ballots until after 11:00 p.m.—a more than four-hour wait. Contributing factors in some polling places were poor layout, a shortage of well-trained poll workers, and a shortage of poll locations.

In Louisiana, people who claimed that they were prevented from voting because their voter registration at local driver's license bureaus under the "motor voter" law never got processed. According to the Registrar of Voters, dozens of voters in Jefferson Parish alone found themselves with no designated precinct to go to. On the west bank of New Orleans, there were 75–100 calls from people who claimed to have changed their address, but were not in the Registrar's records. And in St. Tammany, Registrar of Voters M. Dwayne Wall said that approximately 100 people called because of apparent problems with the Department of Motor Vehicles registration process.

In Missouri, it was contended that many registered voters were inaccurately stricken from the rolls after a mail canvass. They also allege that procedures for re-registering those "inactive" voters were too cumbersome, and that many polling places were understaffed or had no telephone contact with the board's downtown headquarters.

And in my home state, voters complained that the polling places had undertrained administrators and long lines.

STORIES OF ELECTION DAY PROBLEMS

In New Orleans, voters were not allowed to vote because their voter registration at local driver's license bureaus under the state's motor voter law never got processed. Leslie Boudreaux moved from one precinct and registered. However, she was turned away at her polling place.

In Portland, Maine, it appears that as many as 15,000 voters were illegally purged from voting rolls and were forced to wait in long lines at City Hall to register again and vote. One voter forced to stand in line, Shirley Lewellyn, said she was "mad as hell" about having to stand in a long registration line when she wanted to be with her husband, who was undergoing minor eye surgery. "I've voted for 20 years at [my precinct], and when I went there this morning, they told me I wasn't on the list."

In Columbia, South Carolina, some registered voters said they were turned away from the polls, while others said they were intimidated by poll workers and NAACP poll watchers were asked to leave poll sites.

In Boston, Mass., a volunteer who was giving voters rides to the polls received a call from an amputee for a ride to the polls. The caller stated that he had attempted to vote at the polling place he had voted a year before and was turned away. The volunteer drove the man to four different poll sites and were turned away each time. Only at the last poll site were they told that the first poll site, the one the man had visited initially, was the correct one.

THERE ARE SOLUTIONS

Most importantly, we must address the instances of voter intimidation, such as police

checkpoints near polling places, and the widespread problem of overbroad felony voter purges. The best voting machines in the world won't do any good if they don't let legal voters vote.

We should have more vigorous investigation and enforcement of civil rights laws and government aid to states should be contingent upon affirmative steps by states to comply with those laws.

The most obvious problem for states and localities has been an inability or unwillingness to fund 21st Century election technology. The federal government needs to step in and provide assistance to states to replace old voting machines.

But we need to help states do more than that. States need better trained poll workers and better educated voters.

We need to ensure that polling places accessible to persons with disabilities. More than that, it is unthinkable in the year 2001 that we have not implemented technology that allows a seeing impaired person to cast an independent secret ballot. The federal government can provide financial assistance and encouragement in this area as well.

We need to use federal dollars to encourage states to make democracy easier, by implementing same day registration procedures.

And there is a "data gap." No unbiased entity is testing voting machines. There has been no rigorous study of whether other innovations, such as an election day holiday, are needed. We need to study these issues very carefully and very quickly.

In short, Congress needs to act and it needs to act soon before these incidents are repeated in the 2002 elections.

Together we have fought to end voting disenfranchisement and secure racial justice in the electoral arena. Today, the fight continues. The voice of each American must be allowed to be heard in our democracy.

BLACK HISTORY MONTH

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentlewoman from California (Ms. PELOSI) is recognized for 5 minutes.

Ms. PELOSI. Mr. Speaker, I thank the gentleman from Michigan (Mr. SMITH) for his kindness in allowing me this time, and I want to join others in commending the Congressional Black Caucus and our colleague, the gentlewoman from Ohio (Mrs. JONES), for her leadership in calling this Special Order today.

Nothing speaks to the contribution made by the African American community to our great country than the eloquence that we heard on this floor today from our Members and the fine record of achievement by the African American community and the members of the Congressional Black Caucus to Congress over time.

The focus today on this celebration of Black History Month has been election reform. My colleagues, including the gentlewoman from California (Ms. LEE), talked about the history of voting rights in this country and how African Americans first got those rights and what the struggle has been. Now, as we look to the future, we must improve.

The issue of electronic voting, using technologies for the future, having a uniform standard, even if it is not a uniform manner of casting ballots and counting them, is essential. We must be very proactive in making sure that the people in all of our communities, including the African American community, know that when they vote, they will be counted, that indeed they do count.

We must be aware of the fact that some of the technology may increase the disparity that we have, so I caution us as we go forward to involve ourselves in those technologies which increase participation and which are more uniform in their standard rather than again advantaging those who have more resources with technology at home.

So while we have big challenges ahead, again we are blessed with the resources, the human resources of the Congressional Black Caucus in this Congress. And I want to point with pride to a newly elected member of our Board of Supervisors in San Francisco, Sophie Maxwell. She comes from a proud tradition. Her mother, Enola Maxwell, is very active in education and other social and economic justice issues in our community. Sophie is a member of the Democratic State Central Committee. She has been a leader on issues in our community. She has made us, and will make us, all very proud.

But back to the Congressional Black Caucus, I want to thank them for what they are doing. It is important to the black community and important to the Black Caucus, and it is important to our great country.

With that, Mr. Speaker, though I have so much more to say but only a little time, I wish to yield to a great leader, someone we are very, very proud of in California, she is a national leader on this and so many other subjects important to strengthening our country and making the future brighter for all of America's children, the gentlewoman from California (Ms. WATERS).

Ms. WATERS. Mr. Speaker, I want to thank my colleague, the gentlewoman from California (Ms. PELOSI), for her generosity in sharing her very limited time with me so that I will have an opportunity to continue my remarks on this very important issue of elections and election reform.

I am very proud to announce that the minority leader, the gentleman from Missouri (Mr. GEPHARDT), today appointed me to serve as the chairperson for a Democratic Caucus special election reform committee. I am honored to accept that appointment and to work with the vice chairs of that committee to travel across this country holding town halls, workshops, and meetings where we will listen to the people. We will hear from the people the problems that they are experiencing in their States and in their jurisdictions as it relates to the elections process.

We were focused on the problems of the election system in Florida in this recent election, and we were amazed at the disenfranchisement that took place there in so many different ways. But we have come to understand that it is not simply Florida, but everywhere we look in this country we can point to problems. Those problems include dysfunctional voting machines, long lines where people are waiting to vote that cannot get in before the polls close. We saw the butterfly ballot, and we learned that that was kind of the decision of one person. We saw in Florida, for example, that one person in the elections office could determine that absentee ballots or requests or applications could be taken out from the office to be taken home to be worked on. We saw all kinds of things.

So we are going to go around the country, and we are going to hear more. We are going to hear about consolidations that eliminate the ability for people to participate. Again, we have a lot of work to do. We will be doing that, and we hope that everyone who would like to be involved can be involved in this.

SOCIAL SECURITY

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under the Speaker's announced policy of January 3, 2001, the gentleman from Michigan (Mr. SMITH) is recognized for 60 minutes.

Mr. SMITH of Michigan. Mr. Speaker, I am a farmer from Michigan, and I know that you are as well in your State of Florida.

Agriculture today and the plight of farmers is one of the serious issues before Congress. Another serious issue that is sort of the overriding consideration of where we go in the next several months is how high should taxes be in this country and how should government spend that tax money that comes down here to Washington as we decide on the priorities for spending.

This first chart is a pie chart that shows the different pieces of pie, or the percentage of spending this year that goes into several categories. Social Security takes 20 percent of all Federal spending. Social Security is the largest expenditure that we have in the Federal Government. Of course, the people at risk are the young people today that are going to be threatened with huge increases in taxes or reduced benefits in Social Security benefits.

Out of the approximately \$2 trillion that we will be spending this year, 2001, 20 percent goes to Social Security. The next highest is 12 appropriation bills. Twelve of the appropriation bills all together, what we spend a half a year arguing on, spending for so-called discretionary spending, discretionary meaning what Congress has some discretion over, is 19 percent of the budget. The other 13th appropriation bill is defense, and that takes 17 percent.

But here is Social Security now taking much more than even defense

spending, with Medicare at 11 percent. Medicare is even growing because we are talking now of how do we add some prescription drug coverage to Medicare. So we are looking at the challenge of the Federal Government's expenditure and the Federal Government getting bigger. That means more imposition on individual rights. It is giving more empowerment to Congress and the White House, and it is taking away authority and authorization and power from individuals.

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So the first question it seems to me should be, how high should taxes be?

Mr. Speaker, I would ask our listening audience to give us a guess in their own mind of how many cents out of every dollar they earn goes for taxes at the local, State, and national level, what percentage of what you earn goes in taxes.

Well, if you are an average American taxpayer, a little over 41 percent goes in taxes, 41 cents out of every dollar you earn. When the seniors graduate next year or when they finish college or high school and go into the job market, on average they are going to be shelling out 41 cents of every dollar they earn in taxes, taking the first 4 months out of every year proportionately to pay taxes.

And, of course, everybody is now considering their Federal tax bill. They are looking at the taxes. If they have some investment in some mutual funds, they are getting notices on their 1099s that they have a capital gains tax to pay, even though the value of that mutual fund might have gone down in this past year.

So the question then becomes, how do we have tax fairness? It would be my suggestion that we make every possible effort to reduce taxes from that 41 percent down to at least 35 percent. That is what made this country great is the fact that you are going to get some reward for your efforts to save and invest to try to maybe get a second job or a second part-time job so you can take care of your family.

Well, we now have a tax system that says, look, not only are we going to tax you at the same rate if you get a second job, we are going to tax you at a higher rate if you start earning more money. I think there is a lot to do on tax fairness. I think there is a lot to do on tax simplification.

But I want to spend a little time talking about where we go on finances, and part of that question is how large should the Government debt be in this country.

Right now the debt today is \$5.69 trillion, almost \$5.7 trillion of debt. I am a farmer, as I mentioned, and our tradition on the farm has been to try to pay off some of that mortgage to leave your kids with a little better chance. But what we are doing in this country right now, in this body, and the Senate and the White House is borrowing all of this money and we are going to leave it

up to our kids and our grandkids to pay back.

Without reform, Social Security leaves our kids a legacy of debt larger than we have today. Right now, of the \$5.7 trillion, \$3.4 trillion is so-called Treasury debt, Treasury bonds, Treasury paper. It is so-called the debt to the public, the public borrowing. The rest of the debt is debt that we borrow from the trust fund. Roughly \$1.1 trillion comes from the Social Security trust fund that the Government has borrowed that extra money coming in from Social Security taxes and spent it on other programs.

Yesterday we passed a bill to make sure that we do not do that this year. And then there is \$1.2 trillion that is from all of the other 119 trust funds. And so, most of what we are doing with the extra money coming in from the trust funds, we are writing out an IOU and we are using those dollars to pay down the public debt.

But when the baby-boomers start retiring around 2008, then we are looking at a situation where there is not going to be enough money coming in from Social Security taxes to pay benefits. So what do we do?

Well, what Washington has done in the past is increase taxes. I think it is important that we deal with Social Security now so that we do not rely on tax increases in the future.

And that is why we have this curve. As we pay down the debt held by the public, eventually we are going to have to start borrowing again to pay Social Security benefits and Medicare benefits, and that is going to leave our kids with that huge debt load.

The temporary debt reduction plan does little more than borrow the Social Security surplus to repay the debt held by the public; and when the baby-boomers retire, Social Security surpluses disappear and Federal debt again soars.

Again on the debt, for the whole load of hay, we see now that this is roughly the division of that \$5.7 trillion of debt. But over time, if we keep borrowing money from the Social Security trust fund and Medicare trust fund and other trust funds and use that money to pay down the debt held by the public, then the debt held by the public continues to diminish, but the Social Security trust fund debt and the Medicare trust fund debt are still there. There is not enough money there to pay the benefits that are going to be required after the baby-boomers retire.

That is demonstrated in this chart. In the top left, we see a momentary surplus in Social Security taxes coming in. Right now your Social Security taxes are 12.4 percent of essentially everything you make. But when the baby-boomers retire and go out of the pay-in mode to recipients of Social Security, then the problem really hits us from twofold, a tremendous increase in the number of retirees that are going to be taking Social Security benefits and a reduced number of workers that